



The Cleveland Museum of Art

January 27, 1994

THE PRINT CLUB OF CLEVELAND: PUBLICATION PRINTS 1924-1994
March 9 - June 26, 1994

The Print Club of Cleveland began in December, 1919, three years after The Cleveland Museum of Art opened. Now the nation's oldest print club affiliated with a museum, it has supported the Museum's collection with gifts from the Club and from its individual members. Such gifts, which have continued for 75 years, now account for one-third of the Museum's present collection of approximately 13,000 prints.

Since 1924 the annual commission of a presentation print, in an edition of approximately 250, has combined the Club's two goals: to enhance the Museum's collection and to stimulate interest in collecting prints. The exhibition honoring the Print Club of Cleveland's 75th anniversary--March 9 through June 26, 1994--will show all of these, plus several smaller commissioned editions, with a selection of the preparatory materials in the Museum's collection. A total of 83 prints by 71 artists will be exhibited. A full list of the artists and their works is attached.

Many important artists have been chosen for these commissions, representing a wide variety of printmaking techniques and styles. Among them are Henry Keller (1924), Henri Matisse (1934), Thomas Hart Benton (1940), Salvador Dali (1946), George Grosz (1949), Lyonel Feininger (1951), Charles E. Burchfield (1953), Shiko Munakata (1959 and 1960), Adja Yunkers (1965), Jacob Kainen (1978), Bridget Riley (1982), Leonard Baskin (1985), and David Shapiro (1993). The Print Club receives from the artist the preparatory drawings, proofs, blocks, plates, and other related materials for each publication, which it gives to the Museum along with an impression from the published edition. Several special publications, in smaller editions, have also been commissioned; among the artists chosen for these editions have been Jack Tworkov (1979), Günter Grass (1984) and, in 1993, Robert Cottingham.

In the 1950's and 1960's, the publication of the annual commission was sometimes the occasion for a special exhibition at the Museum. A catalogue often accompanied the exhibition, its cover designed by the artist. A brief essay summarized the artist's career, followed by selected illustrations and a complete listing of works on exhibit--usually borrowed from the artist's private collection and from other museums--and included paintings and drawings, as well as prints.

The first such exhibition was Lyonel Feininger's in 1951, celebrating his lithograph, *Off the Coast*, the Club's 29th publication. The catalogue raisonn   of Feininger's prints was prepared by Leona E. Prasse (1897-1984), who was curator in the Department of Prints and Drawings for forty-two years (1925-1967), the most important donor to the Department, and a driving force behind the Club. Miss Prasse and other Club members bought from the Feininger exhibition and gave their acquisitions, at the time or later, to the Museum. This pattern of generous support for artists and for the Museum continues today.

The 1952 exhibition of Antonio Frasconi's work was his largest and most comprehensive to that date. His woodcut, *The Dog and the Crocodile*, the Club's 30th publication, is one of a portfolio of 15 woodcuts of fables; to depict this fable by Phaedrus, Frasconi used the knot in the wood and the swirling grain around it to suggest the movement of the water and the crocodile's undulating body as it floats ominously above the cagey little dog.

The Print Club's desire to recognize local artists began with Henry Keller, who created three etchings--*The Hermitage of Talavera*, *At the Spring of the Avellanos*, and *On the Road to Antequera*--in 1924, as the first Club commission. Other Cleveland artists and their works include Paul Travis, *Black Bass and Minnows* (lithograph, 1925), Phyllis Sloane, *The Straw Hat* (screenprint, 1983), and Phyllis Seltzer, *Venetian Sky* (electrostatic copier and heat transfer, 1988). This recognition has extended to artists who had moved away, such as Charles Burchfield, who was invited to create the 1953 print, and Hugh Kepets, now working in New York. Burchfield responded with the lithograph, *Summer Benediction*; the special exhibition presenting his publication included the preparatory drawing for the lithograph, based on a watercolor of the same title painted in 1948, and was the first exhibition devoted solely to his drawings.

On occasion, Print Club exhibitions at the Cleveland Museum traveled to other museums. The 1955 exhibition of Rudy Pozzatti's work--the largest and most representative showing of the young mid-western artist's work until that time--was circulated, in a smaller version, by the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service through 1956-1957. Pozzatti's etching-engraving, *Palazzo, Florence*, is intricate in both design and execution; printed in colors from three copper plates, it has a convincing three-dimensional quality.

In both 1959 and 1960, Shiko Munakata, the respected Japanese artist, was the Print Club's choice. His two woodcuts, *Fish and Flames and Female Buddha* and *Gautama and Bodhisattvas*, reflect his sources in images of deities favored by various Buddhist sects, though he had often said that his work is based on Zen Buddhism.

Exhibitions of works by Gabor Peterdi (1962), Juvenal Sanso (1964), and Piero Dorazio (1965) concluded the annual exhibitions. Since the mid-1960s, the Print Club members have varied their celebrations of the commissioned artists and the finished prints, often sponsoring lectures or other events. In

recent years, technical experiments and variety have been notable features of some commissions. Among these are Fritz Eichenberg's book and wood engraving, *Eleonora* (1981), Suzanne Anker's *Cacoon* in cast paper pulp (1989), and David Shapiro's *Kāla 7*, spit-bite, etching, drypoint, and carborundum (1993).

A history of the Print Club published on its 50th anniversary will be brought up to date with Volume II, covering the last 25 years; the book will be published to accompany the exhibition.

At 1:30 pm on Wednesday, March 23, Sunday, March 27, and 2:30 pm, and on Thursday, March 24, a gallery talk will be given in the exhibition by Robert A. Dewey, Instructor in the Museum's Department of Education and Public Programs.

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For additional information, photographs, color slides, please contact Adele Z. Silver, Manager, Public Information, The Cleveland Museum of Art, 11150 East Boulevard, Cleveland OH 44106; 216/421-7340.